



Focus by itsBeckChadwick

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Romance, Supernatural

Language: English

Characters: OC, Steve H.

Pairings: Steve H./OC

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-03-31 23:25:54

Updated: 2019-04-19 18:35:41

Packaged: 2019-12-12 20:36:48

Rating: T

Chapters: 10

Words: 22,622

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Georgie is a good girl. 4.0 GPA. MVP on the girls soccer team. But as something dark brews in Hawkins, Georgie finds herself tied up in it. And her focus shifts from school to the survival of the people she cares about most. [Steve Harrington x OC]

1. Chapter 1

Seriously, listen. I know I have other stories incomplete. BUT, I'm seriously stuck on those. Narnia is too short and with Polly & George I'm blocked, I don't know where it's going they're still young but it's been a long time so I'm just confused. ANYWAY I want you to know that this story is an extremely slow burn. Because right now the whole story is planned out (by writer's block I've prepared) and it doesn't break any canon at anytime. So. Anyways enjoy.

And I own nothing.

*November 6th, 1983
HAWKINS, INDIANA*

The front door of the house slammed, jolting Georgie from her studies. She was in the middle of reviewing her notes for a chemistry test when her little brother, Dustin, came in, complaining about a comic book that he lost.

"Are you even listening?" Dustin asked, sitting behind her on the couch. She was sat on the floor at the small coffee table with her books spread all over the floor and the table.

"Not really, pipsqueak. I have a whole lot to review and very little time to do it." She looked at him over his shoulder and saw his lightly defeated face. She sighed, and turned around. "You got ten minutes, tell me about today's campaign."

Dustin's smile grew, and he quickly went into depths about how the party had to save a city from a monster only to follow it back to its lair to find out that it wasn't even the worst monster there was. Dustin also talked about how Will rolled for a fireball, but he doesn't know if it passed or not. "It's intense, because if it fails then he's gone." Dustin stood up and began to walk towards his room. "I'm going to grab my homework, and I'll come sit with you."

"Sounds good," she said, going back to her notes. The test wasn't for a few days, but she wanted to be prepared. She wanted to get a soccer scholarship to college, but if that doesn't pan out then she wants an

academic scholarship. She keeps on the varsity team – hopefully making captain next year – and keeps her GPA at a perfect 4.0 then colleges will be fighting over her. She had high goals and no one will get in her way.

"You're friends with Nancy Wheeler, has she seemed different to you now that she's dating Steve?" Dustin asked, opening his science textbook and getting himself comfortable on the floor.

"Not really," Georgie said, "she's pretty well the same."

Dustin made a small grunting noise in response but that was the end of the conversation. Dustin knew better than to bother her while she had her nose in her books. She was a little obsessive and very competitive. If she wasn't the best at something, give her two weeks, and then she would be.

Georgie even learned guitar just because someone else in her class had. In the summer, on winter break – she was always teaching herself something.

November 7th, 1983
HAWKINS, INDIANA

The next morning, Dustin and Georgie were sitting at the table eating some sugary breakfast cereal. Dustin was making ridiculous faces and spilling milk out of his mouth on purpose. Georgie just watched on and said nothing. She was too tired to care.

Their mother, Claudia Henderson, was making a pot of coffee for herself while watching her kids. She lucked out and got two that got along well. Yeah, they fought. That was inevitable. But, it was hardly ever.

"I'm heading out," Georgie said, bringing her bowl over to the sink and grabbing an apple off of the table. "Still want a ride, pipsqueak?"

"Uh, yeah sure. Let me just go throw my bike in the backseat," he said, grabbing his bag and running outside. "Bye mom!" he shouted over his shoulder.

"Bye," George said, kissing her mom on the cheek. She grabbed her

backpack off of the table and slung one strap over her shoulder.

"Bye sweetie, love you!" Claudia said.

"Love you too."

While Dustin was getting his bike into the backseat of her car, Georgie got into the driver's seat and turned it on. Her dad left her his car when he left. She guessed he had bought himself a nice new one before the divorce and just didn't tell anyone. He still called every now and then, but he wasn't super present. Georgie had given up on that and began focusing on other things.

"Okay," Dustin said, getting into the car. "Let's go."

"Seat belt," she said, looking at him. She waited until she heard the click to back out of the driveway. "So what's going on today? Did Mr. Clarke get his ham radio yet?"

"Hopefully," he said. "We've only been waiting for almost a month."

"What a great addition to the AV club, a ham radio," she said, giving Dustin the apple to hold. She was afraid of it rolling onto the floor off of her lap.

"You don't care about AV club," he said, rolling his eyes.

"That's not true, just because it's not my cup of tea doesn't mean I don't care," she said. She told him to turn on the radio and find a working station. Her car liked to change the station every time she turned the stupid thing off – it didn't seem like a reason to stop using it. Down Under by Men at Work came on the radio.

"Good?"

"Absolutely."

The rest of the way, the duo sang along to the song and danced as much as they could confined in their seats. Georgie stopped out front of the middle school, where Mike and Lucas were already waiting by the bike rack. They waved at her, and she waved back. Dustin grabbed his bag and bike from the backseat and rushed over to meet

his friends. He shouted goodbye over his shoulder at his sister. She rolled her eyes and shouted it back. Then took back off down the street. The school's were pretty close together. So she was parked at her own school before the end of the next song.

Awkwardly, she reached into the back seat to get her own backpack. While making sure she had everything she needed, she realized that her little brother took her apple with him. Jerk. She rolled her eyes before getting out of the car. She threw her car keys in her bag before making her way into the school. She likes to go about an hour early so she can just sit and review her work before homeroom started. Georgie was a bit of an over achiever. And maybe one day she'll regret not having more fun – but right now she's focused. Always focused.

As per usual, there was no one in the halls yet. Another perk of coming in early, not having to deal with people crowding the hallways – the bastards.

Georgie stopped at her locker, put her bag in and took her books out. Her routine was boring. But it worked. Georgie was walking to her homeroom when she bumped into Steve Harrington who was walking around the corner fast. She didn't drop anything, but she still wasn't impressed.

"Sorry George," Steve smiled.

"It's Georgie." She rolled her eyes. She didn't have a personal issue with the guy, but he also wasn't the nicest guy around. He was sometimes pretty rude to her buddy Jonathan, and that didn't really fly well with her. But Nancy was into him, and they were friends. It was too complicated. Georgie didn't do well with complicated. She liked clear, concise. Not messy.

"Ah shit, sorry. I knew that," he said. "Look I actually gotta get going so, bye."

"See ya," she said, walking past him and not looking back.

As messy as the situation was. He was cute. She understood that much of it.

After nearly an hour of making sure every question on her homework was right, she left homeroom to go find Nancy and Barb and see what they were doing. Guaranteed catching up on all the gossip.

As she thought, they were standing by Nancy's locker. She walked up to them. They all all smiled at each other.

"Nance was just telling me how her and Steve were a two time thing – but," Barb said snatching the note left in Nancy's locker telling her to meet in the bathroom.

"That explains why he was here early, he wanted to slip that in your locker and not get caught." Georgie didn't understand relationships very well.

"How early did you get here today?" Barb asked.

"Early enough." Georgie smiled.

"I'm gunna get going," Nancy said tucking the note into her binder. She smiled and walked off in the direction of the bathrooms.

Georgie and Nancy giggled while walking away towards homeroom. Georgie had homeroom and chemistry with Nancy and Barb. Then english with Jonathan. And finally history with none of her friends. Her and Barb walked into the room, where classmates were finally filling the seats. Georgie sat in front of Barb. Her homework was left open on her desk. Someone could have stolen it. She closed her books as the bell rang.

Nancy didn't make it into the room before the bell, she rushed in just a few minutes after. She had a small smile on her face that both Georgie and Barb picked up on. They glanced at each other before turning back to the front and listening to the role call.

A few hours later, Georgie was back at home after both school and soccer practice. She was watching TV with her mom. Dustin is always done school a little later than Georgie is. So they had to wait for him to get home. Claudia got a call from Joyce Byers earlier asking if Claudia had any idea where Will was. Now, they sat on the couch. Making sure that Dustin came home exactly when he was supposed

to.

He did, slamming the door behind him with a very angry expression. Georgie quickly made her way over to him, and they wrapped their arms around each other.

"They can't find Will," Dustin said, worry clear in his voice.

"I heard that, but you know that the police are gunna look super hard and find him, okay? He's gunna get found. You know Flo? From the station? She's putting together a search party and we'll help look and-"

"Actually no, I called Florence back and told her we wouldn't be able to make it," Claudia said, walking up to her kids.

"What? Mom, you can't be serious," Georgie said, letting go of Dustin. "This is Will Byers we're talking about here."

"I'm worried about that little boy and I pray that he comes home safe, but there's just nothing that you can say that will make me let you go stomping around in the woods after dark. Especially now that boy is missing."

"Mom! We have to help," Dustin said, taking a few steps towards his mom. Georgie hugged Dustin's shoulder from behind, and rested her chin on the top of his classic baseball cap.

"I said no," Claudia said. "That's final."

She left the room, leaving her two children in the den to think about what just happened. Dustin let out a frustrated sigh, and grabbed his older sister's arms. "I don't like this anymore than you do, but what can we do? C'mon, I know you have homework."

"Why is it always about homework with you?"

"When I feel like I'm losing control, I have to gain some back by accomplishing something. And right now I feel like I'm losing quite a bit of power. So I have to study." Georgie kissed the top of Dustin's hat and then let him go.

"You have some kind control problem," Dustin said. "You should talk to someone about that."

"Yeah, maybe."

Georgie laid on her bed, and began rereading her notes. She knew everything she read. She'd memorized it three times over. But she didn't know what else to do with her time without flipping out. Dustin had gone into his room and she assumed he would hide himself in there for the night.

Georgie woke up, books scattered all around her. She didn't mean to fall asleep. She didn't even remember falling asleep. It was ten at night when she looked at the clock. Her mom didn't even wake her up for dinner. Rude. Her body was exhausted. For the last two weeks she'd done nothing but homework and soccer. Her body finally quit. Of boredom? Of exhaustion? Could be anything. She got out of her bed, and gathered all of her notebooks, shoving them back into her backpack. For lack of a better idea, she went to bed. Hoping that she would wake up to this whole situation behind them.

Hopefully, she'd wake up to news that Will was found.

And everything was okay.

2. Chapter 2

Hey, still own nothing. I want to know if you guys like it so far! Leave me a review. Anyway, I need everyone to truly understand that this is a slow burning romance. So get comfy.

November 8th, 1983

HAWKINS, INDIANA

Georgie woke up at 6am. She was somehow still tired. She must have really overslept last night. Her stomach was growling so loud it was surprising that hadn't woken her up earlier. Probably because she slept through dinner and no one woke her up for it. Claudia was probably worried about Will, and angry that her kids wanted to go help and she had to be the bad guy. Georgie pulled herself out of bed and immediately went to get breakfast. Her mom was in the kitchen making pancakes.

"Any news?" Georgie asked, taking a seat at the table.

"I thought you might be hungry, so I made breakfast." Claudia walked over and slid some pancakes onto the plate, and then filled up a glass with orange juice.

"Mom, any news about Will?"

Claudia paused. And set down the plate of food she was holding, and sat at the table as well. She shook her head. Georgie frowned, taking a small bite of pancake. Suddenly she didn't feel very hungry at all. The idea of Will being lost somewhere, and then having no news after a huge search party.

"I'm going to get Dustin, he's probably hungry." Georgie got out of her chair and walked down the hallway.

She knocked on his door, and heard a groan inside of his room. Georgie told him through the wood that there were chocolate chip pancakes waiting if he got up now. In less than a minute he opened the door and the pair walked back to the kitchen. Dustin didn't even

bother asking, he knew that they would've already told him if Will had been found. Georgie was worried about all four of the boys, not just Will.

"Can I catch a ride with you again today? I'm tired and don't feel like biking," Dustin said, cramming his face full with food.

"Yeah, I'll probably leave in an hour so be ready or be left behind," George said, laughing. Dustin smacked her arm.

"Stop it you two," Claudia said. "I have to go to work early this morning. So I trust you two to clean up the table and be to school on time."

The two ate, cleared the table and got ready for school in about forty minutes. Then Georgie was reviewing a sheet of notes for her test today. If she got less than 100 per cent, she'll be angry. She's only been memorizing for a week now. And she always pays attention. Georgie sighed, and put the sheet into her bag. She needed to stop looking it over, the words stopped looking like words a minute ago. She walked outside to see Dustin sitting patiently in the passenger seat.

When Georgie got in, Dustin was dead silent. He didn't crack a joke, or tell her about the ham radio he got to play with yesterday. He had briefly mentioned his encounter with Hopper, but didn't really go into detail. Something was up.

Something was different.

"So, what's going on?"

"What? What makes you think there's something. There's nothing," Dustin panicked and looked out the window. "Nothing at all."

What a liar. But, she decided not to push it. He would tell her when he was ready. Dustin's never been able to keep something from her for long. In the past, Claudia had to get a babysitter for Dustin whenever she was buying a gift for Georgie, because he always gave it away. But Georgie would admit, she was seriously worried about him. One of his best friends was missing.

Dustin just said a quiet goodbye, and left when she stopped outside of the school. He almost forgot his bike.

All Georgie could think about on the rest of the way to school was how Dustin, Mike and Lucas must be feeling. And most of all how Will must be feeling. Wherever he is, he must be so scared. Will was a bright young man, and one of the nicest kids in town. Shit like this just didn't happen in Hawkins.

She parked her car and went straight into class. She didn't even care to drop her bag off, she just need to sit down. Nancy came in just after the bell rang.

"Hey," Nancy said, sliding into her seat. "Have you seen Barb today?"

"No, I didn't hang around in the hallways I just came straight here. Why? She sick or something?"

"I don't know," Nancy said, "she just kind of left Steve's last night and I haven't seen her since."

"Well I think given the Will circumstance you have to tell someone, I don't care if it hasn't been the right amount of time." Georgie looked worried. The last thing she needed to hear was that Barb was missing too.

"I'll call her mom right after school, okay?"

"Okay, please call me after? So I know?" Georgie asked. The teacher walked in and the class grew silent so Nancy just nodded in response.

Thinking about the topic just got Georgie even more fired up. For the first time this semester, Georgie wasn't super active in the lesson. Sure, she was listening. But she only answered questions when directly asked. Or if no one else raised their hand. As soon as the bell rang she was out of her seat and in the hallway. She basically ran down the hallway, clutching her books tight to her chest. She felt like she couldn't breath. She threw open the front doors to the school and put her books on top of the rail. They fell off the side and notes fell out but she didn't even care at the moment. She was having a panic attack. Thinking about her brother in danger made her panic. That

was her best friend after all.

"You dropped your books," Jonathan said, walking up the stairs towards Georgie. He was holding them, all the notes tucked back safely inside. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine," she said, taking her books back. She smiled at him. "How are you? How's Joyce?"

"I'm doing fine, mom needs help and I don't know what to do." Jonathan scratched the back of his neck.

"I am so sorry, if you or Joyce need anything just call me okay? I'll come running," Georgie said. Jonathan smiled half heartily. Georgie set her books by her feet and wrapped him in a hug. She heard him sigh by her ear before he hugged her back.

"Thank Georgie, you're a good friend." The bell rang inside, and the two of them walked in together. "I'm not going to class, I'm just putting up some flyers. But I'll catch you later."

"Bye," she said, walking away, gripping her books tightly against her chest again.

Georgie had to rush to get to her class on time. Not tardy, ever. It wasn't her style.

The rest of the day went by uneventfully for Georgie. She went to her classes. She sat by her locker at lunch and studied, away from everyone. Away from Nancy and Steve. Something about those two together just gave Georgie the shivers. It wasn't ... right. Something about it just didn't sit right with Georgie. And now on top of worrying about Will, Dustin, Lucas and Mike – she was worried about Barb as well. She was losing control, and fast. She had to gain it back.

After school, she was rushing towards her car. She needed to get away from the school, it was as if she was having a breakdown. She felt like her chest was constricting itself, but also like something was trying to claw its way out. She couldn't breathe. And that's when she stumbled on Jonathan, on all fours looking at his camera. She was confused to say the least, but maybe he was getting a cool shot or

something. But as she got closer she could hear his sniffles.

Georgie rushed over to him, crouching close in front of him and put her hand on his back. He didn't look up, or pretend like he wasn't crying like a lot of people would do.

"C'mon, get up. Let's sit in my car. The last thing these animals need is to see you cry, lord only knows what they'd do then." Georgie put her hands under his arms, and helped him collect himself off the ground. She picked up his camera for him and looked at the broken lens. "What did they do? Who did this?"

"Harrington, and his friends. And Nancy." Jonathan wiped his tears away with the back of his hand. "I can't sit, I have to go. Mom goes a little crazy when I'm not back on time."

"Okay, call me if you need to."

Jonathan nodded, heading off. He left her with the broken camera.

Georgie was *livid* walking through the halls of the school. She knew he'd still be here. There was a home game tonight and it was pretty much the only thing to do. Jonathan is going through absolute hell and Steve thinks he can just be a dick and get away with it. No. Georgie had enough with big tough guys acting like king shit all the time. He wasn't anything special. He was just a popular guy in a highschool.

And she didn't give a shit about him. Or his title.

She found him sitting by his locker. Tommy and Carol sitting across from him laughing at something. When she got closer she realized they were teasing him about getting ditched by Nancy.

"You are such a punk," Georgie said, standing in front of Steve with her arms crossed. "You don't think he's been through enough, and now you have to play some macho guy routine to what? Impress Nancy? Worked pretty well, where is she now?" Tommy and Carol laughed at her words, but she ignored them.

"Shut up, what do you know?" Steve asked, standing up. He crossed his arms and glared, as if that would have any affect.

"Listen here, shit-stain. You have no reason to be a prick. Who does that help? How does it help you? It doesn't. All it does is make you look like a huge asshole. So just, knock it off. Before someone gets fed up and knocks you."

"Oh, and who's gunna do that? Jonathan?"

"Maybe, you don't know. Keep pretending like your a tough guy and eventually someone's gunna throw a fist or two, and pretending doesn't actually make you tough, it just gets you knocked out. So cut the shit, and leave Jonathan alone." Georgie spun on her heels and started walking away.

"Or what?" he called after her.

But she wasn't too confrontational. She didn't feel the need to get the last word in. But she did flip him off over her shoulder. And the giggles coming from Tommy and Carol made her believe he saw it. She knew that if he would just stop bullying people they would too. Because they're sheep. God damn mutton.

Jonathan's car was out of the parking lot by now. He probably left the second he said he was going to. She saw a piece of paper flying around, and when the wind relaxed, she grabbed it. It was a picture of trees, with the edge of something white by the edge. The picture was ripped, so she was missing some. But as she looked closer she could almost swear that she saw something looming by the treeline.

Control. She was losing it again. Her fears made her lose control. Did Barb and Will both encounter the same thing? Georgie took the piece of a picture with her. She just felt like she needed to. She didn't know what she needed to do other than regain some control. She got into her car and got home as fast as she could. She never broke the speed limit, but today she just had to be in her own house. In the safety of home. Where was Dustin? Coming home late. He was with his friends. How late was late? They should've set a time.

She ran from her car to her room and ripped out every textbook she had. She started from the beginning of the chemistry textbook and just started working through every single practice exercise. In a brand new notebook she filled it with all the answers. She got halfway

through the entire thing before anyone came home. She barely noticed time was passing. She felt in control. The only thoughts going through her mind her science. Chemistry. She liked chemistry. She snapped out of her trance when the front door closed, and Dustin burst into her room shortly after.

He was crying.

Georgie already knew what was going on. She jumped up, throwing her textbook onto the floor and wrapped her arms around her little brother. She knew what was happening before he even said anything. They must have found Will. In a bad way. She had her arms tightly around Dustin as he cried. His whimpers breaking Georgie's heart every second.

Georgie didn't know what to think, or do. Should she call Jonathan? What would that help? Would it be worse? How should she make Dustin feel better? This kind of thing didn't happen around here. And she refused to believe that he got lost and died on his own. Will took that same route everyday for years, and he is such a smart kid. And he was so *good* at hiding.

Dustin cried until he seemed to be unable. Georgie held him the whole time, and even afterwards. When their mom came home, she said nothing when she peeked into Georgie's room. All she did was watch her kids. Georgie had dried tears on her cheeks. None of this was right.

Something was wrong.

How could Will be dead?

3. Chapter 3

Still own nothing.

November 9th, 1983

HAWKINS, INDIANA

Georgie woke up feeling awful. And it was no mystery why. Dustin had stayed in her room last night. A feat they hadn't done in years. The last time was when Dustin was nine and watched a movie that gave him nightmares, but he didn't want their mom to think that she was right, so he crawled into Georgie's bed instead. Now, Dustin was still sleeping away, and Georgie didn't feel the need to wake him up. Quietly, she collected her books, backpack, and some clothes for the day.

She tip toed out of the room and closed the door behind her. The only sound she seemed to make was the sound of the door clicking behind her. She stopped tip toeing, but still walked gently. Claudia was in the kitchen, making some food.

"I took the day off of work, I don't think Dustin will be going to school today." Claudia didn't look away from the stove.

"Mom?"

"Yes, honey?"

Georgie walked over and hugged her mom, her tears falling onto the penguin pyjamas that Claudia wore all the time. She let go of her mom, and walked past the table and down the hallway. She got ready in the bathroom. Doing nothing more than changing, then brushing her hair and teeth. She walked back out the the kitchen, her bag slung over her shoulder.

"Are you not going to eat?" Claudia asked, while Georgie made her way over to the door. Georgie put on her shoes.

"I'm not very hungry, mom." Georgie stopped before leaving the house. "I love you, I'm just not hungry." And how could she be? Will

Byers was dead. She'd known him since the day after she moved here. He was a sweet kid.

She slid into her car, and just sat there, gripping the steering wheel. It wasn't fair. Life wasn't fair. She felt like the world was crumbling around her. Her chest, again, was tight and burning. She pulled her shirt down to try and cool her skin but it didn't work. She scratched at the skin but only left herself more irritated. It was like a monster. A monster was pounding her chest and wouldn't stop until it was full of her. And boy was it hungry. She shook the idea from her head.

Monsters aren't real.

Georgie started up her car, and drove to the school. Everyday was the same. Maybe that was the problem. Everyday for two years Georgie had stuck to the exact same routine. Studying and soccer practice. And then suddenly, her days are thrown into a different pattern. A bad pattern. A pattern so bad you can barely even find the trend that *makes* it a pattern. It's kind of like she's so used to dealing with such small problems, that now the problem is a fire. But she only has small solutions. And this. *This* was a very big fire.

She parked her car and then continued to sit there. What was the point of coming to school early? For what? Soccer practice? She didn't really see the point of it anymore. And she loved soccer.

But she made commitments, and she told the team that she would help bring their team to victory this year. Their captain, Vicky, has put a lot of faith on Georgie and how she plays. The last thing she needed was more pressure.

Soccer practice was a welcome distraction from the events of the week. For an hour and a half Georgie thought about nothing but soccer, and the drills that they practised the whole time. It was nice. Until it was over. The girls were all walking to the change room together, to shower and change before classes started in thirty minutes. All the girls liked to rush so they could primp and prime and look *beautiful* for the boys. If Georgie wanted to look beautiful she would do it for herself, and she wished more of the other girls felt the same.

Georgie walked slowly to the locker room, and was eventually left behind by the pack. They had a change room to demolish. Georgie just wanted a quick shower and to get to class. She didn't care if she looked like she'd just been working out. She just wanted to not smell like it.

"There she is! Our star player," Steve Harrington said, shocking Georgie out of her trance. He looked smug as always, and he was putting on this act even completely alone. Was it for himself?

"What do you want, Steve?"

Ignoring her question he asked his own: "Where's your boyfriend?"

"I don't have a boyfriend, what are you talking about?"

"Jonathan Byers? Your true love, your one and only? Did even the freak realize that you're so dull he had to leave? God, that just makes you lower than him, and that is low." Steve grinned at her. She just stared back.

"I don't have time for this, goodbye." Georgie walked passed him. He said something else but she decided not to hear him. It was easier to just ignore him and walk away. She didn't need or want Harrington to get on her nerves right now. He was so talented at just crawling under her skin and staying there, making her annoyed every twenty seconds. He was beginning to feel like a plague, and even though she wasn't thinking the nicest thoughts about him – she was still thinking about him, all the time.

Last year, she had a crush on him. She never told anyone, so it was her own little secret. A dirty one, at that. She had churned and completely pulverized that crush until only annoyance and resentment was left in it's place. Now, she was free from his hold on her. And now that Nancy and him had become an item she no longer had to worry about those feeling reigniting. Because she couldn't ever see herself talking to a friend's ex. Especially Steve.

After a hot shower and a change of clothes, Georgie thought she would feel better. But all she felt was tired, and a little stinging in her eye. She thought maybe that had been from crying last night. Today

had turned into a complete nightmare. And everyone around her was carrying on as if nothing was wrong. When everything was clearly wrong. A child had died, and people just kept gossiping, and talking like it didn't happen. But it did happen, and the ache of loss was clinging to her every muscle, her every *thought*. She didn't understand.

Georgie understood none of it.

When Dustin came home that night, something was different. Georgie knew it before Dustin said anything.

"I have to show you something. And you have to promise not to freak out – you just have to help us," Dustin said, grabbing her hand. She nodded. They went to the car straight away, and Dustin told her to drive to Mike's house.

"Just a little warning, she doesn't trust adults. But I think you're short enough that we'll be able to keep her calm enough to listen to you at the very least. So, you have to convince her that you'll keep her a secret and you won't hurt her."

"Her who?"

But Dustin just told Georgie to wait and see. Georgie was very confused, but she went along with it. She didn't know if it would help or hurt Dustin, but could only hope that it would be a good thing. If she got worried, she would tell their mom or something.

When they got to Mike's, they had to sneak downstairs. They didn't want to talk to the Wheelers all night, they were busy.

"Remember what you promised," Dustin said, stepping off the staircase to the basement. Sitting around were Mike, Lucas and a girl that Georgie didn't know – obviously the *she* that was so secret. "So, Will's alive."

Bad.

This was clearly the wrong choice, she shouldn't have promised him anything because now she'll have to break it because he's not coping

well.

"Dustin! We were going to ease her into it." Lucas rolled his eyes. Dustin never did listen well.

Georgie walked over to the girl, who immediately sat up from lying down. She stared at Georgie with an intensity that only proved that this girl lacked trust. Georgie sat cross legged on the floor, making no moves that would startle the girl. "What's your name?" she asked, a simple question. Georgie doubted the girl would even tell the truth, but that's not the point. She just stared.

"Eleven," Dustin said. Georgie looked over her shoulder at her brother. "But we call her El."

"Okay, El it is. So does someone want to tell me what's going on?" Georgie looked at the girl. She was wearing a pink dress, and her hair was nicely combed. Georgie didn't see any obvious signs of trauma, so they were either hidden, healed or emotional.

Mike told the story.

"We went looking for clues about Will when we weren't supposed to and instead of that, we found her. We brought her back here and she told us about Will. But we never said anything to her about him, she knew on her own. I don't know how. She told us that he was alive when they found the body and we didn't believe her but she was able to channel him through the ham radio at the school and we heard him talking to Joyce – we think, he said the monster was coming. We think that he's on the other side and hiding at his house. But we can't get to him because however he got through is hard to find or gone. El says he's in the upside down." Mike looked at Georgie. "We need your help and no one else's family is cool enough to help."

"Okay," Georgie said, "and how did El know all this?"

"She has powers," he said. "But she can't prove it now, she used all her energy to talk to Will today."

"But she can prove it tomorrow," Dustin said.

Monsters aren't real.

Monsters aren't real

She shouldn't have fed into them like this. Maybe this was their way of grieving but they couldn't go around thinking that Will is stuck in some fake Hawkins. But at the same time, Georgie could tell that these boys were being sincere. Which just made her more concerned about how tired and weak Eleven looked. El had gone back to lying down, clearly exhausted. Georgie stood up, and again tried to approach her. This time she didn't move. Georgie slowly moved her hand to put it on El's forehead, although clearly hesitant, El let her. She felt cold to Georgie.

"We can figure this out tomorrow," Georgie said, moving away. "She needs to get some sleep – she looks worn out." Georgie grabbed a pen and a piece of scrap paper lying on a bookshelf nearby. She scribbled her phone number down. "This is my phone number," she said, making sure El watched where she set it down. "If something happens and you need help and you still don't want to talk to Mrs. Wheeler then you can call me, okay? After school, you can reach me at this number."

"Three fifteen?" she asked. It was the first time that Georgie had heard the girl speak, and she sounded even more timid than she acted.

"Yes," Mike answered for her. Georgie didn't question it.

"Dustin, come on, let's go home. Lucas, do you want a ride?" Georgie asked, he shook his head.

"I'm okay, thanks." Lucas had to sneak back into his house and Georgie's car would be a dead giveaway that he was out of the house when he wasn't supposed to be.

"Let someone know when you're home alright?" she said, walking with Dustin upstairs.

The night sky usually made Georgie happy. It was always nice to look up at the beautiful stars, and try to find the constellations. Now, it just brought darkness which felt like nothing more than danger.

Georgie had never been afraid of the dark before, but now the idea of being alone in the dark was terrifying.

"If this, upside down is real – maybe that's where Barb is." Georgie didn't look away from the road as she spoke. She didn't want to feed into the kids, but she couldn't help but feel like they weren't lying. She slammed on the breaks, shocking Dustin. She bit her thumb for a minute, thinking.

"Why'd you stop?" Dustin asked, looking over at his sister. She looked lost in her thoughts. "Georgie?"

"No bullshit, you heard Will?"

"No bullshit."

She didn't know *why*, but she believed him.

4. Chapter 4

I own nothing. If you wanted to drop a review it would be appreciated! (but not required). Shout out to Superdani4Ever for commenting on the last two chapters. Cheers!

November 10th, 1983

HAWKINS, INDIANA

It was Thursday afternoon, and Georgie was pulling out of the school parking lot. Dustin actually did stay home today, because he was overwhelmed before school and seemed to have a borderline panic attack.

Georgie had seen Nancy at lunch, and she really considered asking about Barb. But she had nothing to say. Nothing to ask that didn't have a good reason behind it. What would she say? Hey, do you think Barb fell into another dimension and is now trapped? Hey, do you think Will is there too? No. That all sounded *crazy*.

She drove down the road carefully, hellbent on getting home and checking on Dustin when she had this urge to just, investigate. She wanted some answers. Will Byers' body had been found, Barb's had not. Maybe there was some kind of clue at Steve's house. Nancy had said that was the last time she had seen Barb. Georgie decided to look around behind Steve's house. It was Friday, he would be somewhere with his friends. Probably. Hopefully.

Georgie parked her car on the street a little bit away from Steve's house. She got out and walked into the woods behind his house. She had no idea what she was looking for, but she hoped she would find something anyway.

It was getting colder in Indiana, and Georgie wanted to be more excited about it. She loved the snow, but there was just a lot going on.

Dead leaves crunched under her shoes as she walked between the trees. What was she doing out here? When she got to the edge of the

treeline, she saw the Harrington house. Steve was in one of the windows, seemingly in a screaming match with his father. Georgie watched as Steve slowly looked more and more upset. Maybe he wasn't kidding when he talked about his dad being a dick.

But it didn't excuse Steve also being a dick.

Steve looked out the window, and Georgie tucked herself behind a tree. What was she *doing*? She didn't do things that could result in her getting caught. She didn't get caught doing things.

She waited there for another minute, deciding that she needed to get out of here before someone saw her and thought she was up to something.

"What are you doing?" Georgie whispered, balling her fist and lightly hitting it off her forehead. She didn't do things like this. Stupid stuff.

"Good question," Steve said, scaring Georgie out from her hiding place. "What *are* you doing?"

"Shit," she said, looking at him. He had his hands on his hips, and a frown on his face. She didn't think he was coming down here, and she had no idea he would be down there so fast. He must have seen her out the window. "Uhm, I don't actually know. I just thought that maybe I would find something." He raised an eyebrow at her. "Well, I have never felt this stupid in my life, I'm going to go now. Bye."

"Wait, Georgie, wait a second." Steve rubbed his forehead while Georgie stood there, feeling humiliated. He would tell everyone that she was stalking him or something. But he sat down, bending his knees and resting his arms on them. Georgie didn't understand the situation, so she just sat down beside him, crossing her legs and folding her hands together. Her Adidas track pants had all her attention. Her brown hair acted as a wall, shielding her from Steve. "What did you see? Through the window?"

"Nothing really, just looked like you were in a fight with your dad."

"Yeah, he found out that Barb was last seen here," Steve said, looking at her. She tucked her hair behind her ear, realizing that Steve wasn't

going to be a dick. "He's not happy."

"Sorry that I was trespassing, if he gets mad that I'm here you can tell him that I just wouldn't leave or something. I'll take the blame," she said, fiddling with her shoelace. Having a sincere moment with Steve was dangerous. Seeing a nicer side of him was bad. She'd rather just see his act – it was easier to hate him that way.

"It's okay, he's leaving tomorrow for a while anyway," Steve said. He looked back at the house. Georgie looked the same direction. For a couple of minutes, they just sat there silently.

Georgie walked into the house and was immediately greeted by Dustin. He was in a better mood, and he wanted to talk more about Eleven and what everything meant. Georgie needed a minute, she picked up Mews, petting the cat while Dustin begged her to go on a drive to Mike's.

"Is she even up for it? She seemed pretty pooped last night, and I want to stop by and see Joyce and ask if she needs anything and I need to go buy a black dress for the funeral," Georgie said, looking at Dustin's disappointed face. She couldn't see him like that, he's been through enough these last few days. "Fine, but only for a little bit."

At Mike's house, Eleven and Mike were in the basement.

El definitely looked better than yesterday, but also different. Gone was the blond hair and dress, replaced with some sweats and a buzz cut.

"Did you guys just do this?" Georgie asked, looking at the lack of hair. It looked pretty cool.

"No, the hair was a wig. Her hair has always been cut like that," Mike said, he turned his attention back to Eleven.

"Well, I like it. I think you're very cool," Georgie said, smiling. Eleven smiled too. "So, what're you guys doing?"

"Flying," Eleven said, looking at a toy model of the Millennium Falcon. Without anyone touching it, the toy floated a few feet off the

ground. Georgie stared at it. It was somehow worse knowing that this girl actually did have powers. Georgie couldn't deny it anymore.

"That's..." Georgie stared at it before it fell back to the floor with a crash. It didn't look broken. "Amazing." She didn't want this girl to know that on the inside Georgie was freaking out. She didn't want to scare Eleven. "How long have you been able to do that?"

"Forever," she said, casually. She has only ever known powers. Georgie had trouble grasping the concept that some people had abilities not yet explained by science. She relied on textbook information. She relied on facts. And she now knew a fact that no one in the science community knew.

Or *did* they know?

"Eleven, sweetie." Georgie sat down on the couch next to Eleven. "Do you always talk so shortly?" Eleven said nothing. "Do you usually only say a few words."

"She doesn't know a lot of them," Mike said. "We've been trying to help."

"Okay, *okay!* Studying!" Georgie got excited. "Something I can really do to help. I can help Eleven learn more words, and the more she knows how to say the more she can help."

"We kinda needed more serious help," Mike said. Georgie glared at him. She didn't care if he was a kid, he would get the stink eye if he gave Georgie attitude. Anyone was going to get the stink eye if they're rude to her.

"I know that Mike, but I don't know what to do quite yet." Georgie fiddled with her fingernail. "But I'm working on that, and I have nothing right now. This is all very new territory."

"She has a point," Dustin said. "We just kind of sprung this on her."

"Would you like to study with me?" Georgie asked, giving Eleven a chance to put her own say into what happens with her. El nodded. "There we have it. If the girl wants to learn she shall learn. Wonderful."

Georgie felt a small twinge in her chest. She had an objective. Something to work towards. A goal that made her feel a little more grounded. Sure, she was going to have to deal with the idea of a shadow world that had Will Byers as a prisoner, the fact that Barb is missing (possibly in the same place as Will – unconfirmed) and that monsters might possibly be real. But when that gets too much she can revert back to teaching Eleven some grammar and words and stuff. That will keep her grounded.

Georgie left Dustin at Mike's, giving him a few hours to hang out with his friends while Georgie went off to do a few errands. She wanted to stop by the Byers' house to see Jonathon and Joyce, and then she had to go buy a dress. She was at this weird stage of her life where she would be attending a funeral of a boy she wasn't one hundred per cent sure was dead.

It wasn't a normal day.

When Georgie pulled into the Byers' driveway, there was a car there that she didn't recognize. It was probably the dad. She couldn't think of his name, but she knew Jonathon must have said it at least once. She got out of the car, frowning. The reason she was here should've been better. When was the last time she had dropped by just to say hello? Now she was stopping in to say sorry your son is dead – even though he may not be! But Georgie couldn't possibly give that kind of hope to a grieving mother.

"Georgie," Joyce said, opening the door. She fluttered across the yard and pulled Georgie into a hug. Shocked at first, Georgie put her hands around the older woman. "Why are you here? Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine I just dropped in to see how you are," Georgie said pulling away from Joyce, but keeping her hands held. Joyce shrugged.

"I'll be better when they find Will, the real Will. My boy is still out there somewhere and someone wants me to believe he's dead but he's not."

Georgie nodded. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. Here she was, afraid to say the wrong thing, when Joyce was thinking it already. Georgie swallowed, "Weird question," she said. "Do you believe in monsters?"

Joyce looked at Georgie with wide eyes. She looked like she was going to answer when Jonathan came onto the front lawn. Joyce just nodded, making Georgie feel both good and ridiculous. She shouldn't have asked, but luckily Jonathan would be a perfect scapegoat if need be. Probably bad to think of him like that during this time, but it was the truth.

"Georgie, hey." He walked across the grass to Georgie and his mother. Georgie dropped Joyce's hands, and stepped closer to hug Jonathan. His arms wrapped tight around her, and she felt so bad thinking of what Jonathon must be going through. She couldn't even begin to imagine the feeling. "Thanks for coming by."

"Yeah, of course." She rubbed his back a few times before pulling away. "I just wanted to drop in and see how you guys were, or if you needed anything."

"We're managing," Jonathan said. She couldn't put her finger on it, but things between Jonathan and Joyce seemed a little tense. Georgie made a note not to bring anything up to Jonathan, he did not feel like he was on the same page at all.

"It was sweet of you to drop by," Joyce said, putting a hand on Georgie's shoulder. "I have a couple things to do, I'll see you later."

"Bye," Georgie said. Joyce smiled and walked away. "How's she doing?" she asked once Joyce was out of earshot.

"She thinks that Will is alive, and being held captive by a monster." Jonathan looked exhausted, and the words seemed to suck out a little more of his mental state. "She'll get out of the denial stage at some point, we just have to wait it out."

"You let me know if you need anything at all, alright?" Georgie said, hugging him again.

"Thanks, and I'll see you tomorrow, right?"

"Of course," Georgie said. "And I'm really so sorry."

"Me too." And for the third time, Georgie hugged Jonathan. But this time she felt his shoulders start to shake. She couldn't blame him for crying, not a bit.

5. Chapter 5

I own nothing. I'm really trying to build up her relationships with everyone in a realistic way. Lemme know what you think guys.

November 11th, 1983

HAWKINS, INDIANA

During class, Georgie picked all the boys up from school and dropped them off at their houses. She had coordinated it with their parents last night, since she was already having to pick up Dustin early for the funeral.

After Georgie and Dustin got home, they said next to nothing as they got ready. Going to a funeral for someone who wasn't even dead (unconfirmed) was somehow worse, and morbid. Georgie put on a plain black dress and some black flats. She was sure to have blisters, since the only pair of none sneakers she had were those flats from her eighth grade graduation.

She looked in the wall length mirror at herself. Her hair was down for the first time in months, she was wearing a dress, and nothing she was wearing said ADIDAS or had stripes. She flattened the dress over her sides, and grabbed the simple silver chain from the dresser and put it on. Dressing up for an event like this felt ridiculous. She felt ridiculous. But if she disobeyed her mother today, there would be hell to pay. And she had plans with the kids tonight.

Oh, the best part of all of this? Suddenly her best friends were a bunch of twelve-year-olds. It felt like they were her only friends.

"I feel weird," Dustin said, standing in the doorway. Georgie turned around to look at her brother. He was wearing a suit, his signature ball cap was somewhere in his room, and he looked much different without it. Not better or worse, just different.

"Me too," she said, walking towards him. She pulled him into a hug. "But it's only a couple of hours, and then we have some things to do."

"Right," Dustin said, frowning. "We have to find Will."

At the funeral, everyone stood around a casket that had a fake Will in it, and cried. Georgie didn't know for a fact that the body in the child sized casket was fake, but she was clinging onto the fact tightly, and letting go of it now would be a quick crash into reality. And the fall would be devastating.

The service was short, and sad. Georgie never took into account that Will was still in danger, in a place that she can't get to. He could still die. This really could be Will's legitimate funeral. Or worse, what would happen if this wasn't Will's funeral and he comes back. How do they explain that?

"I don't know how to react right now," Dustin whispered, leaning in close to Georgie.

"Me either," she whispered back, only to be tapped on the back of her head by her mom.

Georgie held her hand out to her little brother, who grabbed onto it. He held onto her hand, looking down as if trying not to cry. He had to act like he believed it, all of the boys did. They had gone over that at school earlier.

After the funeral, everyone went inside the funeral home for some food. Georgie only drank the free coffee, not feeling very hungry after that. Even if Will wasn't really there, the sight of a child's coffin still hurt the eyes. It was a staring contest between Georgie and a harsh reality, and a harsh reality always wins.

"How is she today?" Georgie asked, sitting next to Mike.

"Good," he answered. There was no need to ask who. "She asked about you."

"Did she?"

"Yeah, I think she really likes you."

"Well, good. She needs someone in her life who isn't her age." Georgie

took a sip of the coffee. It wasn't the best, but it was coffee all the same. Mike just nodded in response. "How are you doing? Feeling alright?"

"I'm fine, I just," he took a breath. "I just hated every second of being there."

"I don't blame you," she said.

"Hey, we need to borrow Mike." Dustin walked from behind Georgie and pointed at their science teacher. "We want to ask Mr. Clarke a few questions."

"Okay, I should find Joyce anyway. Let me know how it goes."

Georgie left the table, joining Joyce at hers. Joyce looked more disoriented than sad. And Georgie thought this would be a good time to talk. She's had this picture tucked into her shoe for hours.

"Care to take a walk? I want to talk about something," Georgie said. Joyce nodded and the pair walked outside.

For a while, they walked quietly side by side. Until eventually, Georgie had to bite the bullet. Her and Joyce were on the same page, and she needed to talk about it. See if Joyce knew anything that Georgie and the kids didn't, all while keeping El a secret.

"So," Georgie started. "Monsters."

"What did Jonathan tell you? I'm not crazy – I know my boy is alive," Joyce said, slightly raising her voice.

"No, no, please, I believe you." Georgie bent down and grabbed the little piece of paper. "This looks like nothing, I know. And I don't even know where it came from. But if you look right here," Georgie said pointing to a tree. "There's this blur, and by the trees and the edge of the pool – I think this is Steve Harrington's house. Which is where my friend Barb was last seen. I think Barb and Will are in the same place."

"Wait, they said the Holland girl ran away," Joyce said.

"They also said that Will was dead. They've been wrong before."

Joyce looked at Georgie for a minute, as if trying to detect any sort of lie in the younger girl's features. But Georgie held her stare, calmly, and proved that she wasn't lying. She was being sincere.

"I saw it," Joyce said. "I know what I saw. Will can see it too, he spoke to me through the lights. It came through my wall." Joyce took a breath. "Wherever he is, he can control lights here. But he's not dead – it's not a ghost."

"I don't think he's a ghost," Georgie said.

"I'm getting him back," Joyce said.

"Let me know if I can help. And please don't tell Jonathan that I'm talking to you about this stuff. I can't really afford to have him mad at me." Georgie gave Joyce a sad half smile, and she just nodded.

Georgie put her car in park, and all the kids scrambled out, running into Mike's house. Georgie followed behind, scanning the area before she went inside. She couldn't help but feel like someone was watching her, and it drove a shiver down her spine. The last thing in the world she needed was something creepy. She's had enough creepy for one day.

As Georgie entered the basement, El smiled at her slightly. Georgie took a seat next to her, ready to get schooled by Mike. He got some *theoretical* answers from Mr. Clarke, and wanted to explain it to her and Eleven. Mike was holding a paper and pencil, and there was a rough drawing of a line and a stick person.

"Ready to science?" Dustin asked, getting up from his seat to pace back and forth. Georgie hated how anxious her brother seemed.

"Always," Georgie said. Finally she got to tell a full truth. She didn't know how to explain the upside down to Joyce, so she didn't tell her about it. She lied to Steve about why she was at his house – but that was justified, he would've called her crazy for monster hunting on his property. But she was genuinely always ready for science.

"Okay, so, Mr. Clarke told us through this metaphor. Our dimension is the tightrope and it has rules, you can go forwards and backwards. But the flea," Mike made a small dot beside the stick person. "Can go back and forth like us as well as along the side or even **upside down**. And to get to the other side you would need massive, *massive* amounts of energy that we don't have yet. But if we did..." Mike folded the paper in half and shoved the pencil through it. El flinched, and Georgie put a soft comforting hand on her arm. "It would take a lot of energy to build a gate like this, but that's gotta be what happened. Otherwise, how'd Will get there, right?"

"Right," El said.

"So, we're the acrobat," Georgie said. Mike nodded. "The demogorgan is the flea. What does that make Will?"

"The acrobat as well but sucked through the gate," Lucas said.

"But how did Will get to the gate? To travel through it?"

"What?" Mike asked.

"How did Will *get* to the gate?" Georgie asked again. "Because wouldn't the gate just suck everyone in? There's no way to control that type of power. That raw energy."

"There has to be a gate," Mike said. "And we have to find it."

"We're missing a piece," Georgie said. "We can't make moves without all the facts." She felt power slipping through her fingers. They weren't listening to her.

"What we want to know is: do you know where the gate is?" Lucas said to El, bypassing Georgie's concerns. She shook her head no. "Then how do you know about the upside down?"

"I talked to Joyce today," Georgie said. Eleven looked at her with wide eyes but Georgie just gently squeezed her arm. "Not about you, sweets. And she said it was coming through her wall. And I believe her. I don't know who did this – but I'm telling you, I think that people lost control and the demogorgan has it now. That's how people just go missing. It can take people away with it. Or make a

gate wherever it goes. This monster has enough power to tear through the dimensions anywhere."

"So, you think there's no gate?" Mike asked.

"On the contrary," Georgie said. "I think that someone out there made this gate – and accidentally *taught* the demogorgan how to do it. How to tear through reality."

"That would explain how Will got taken, and how it's just starting now." Lucas nodded, finally listening to Georgie.

"Humans had to have taught this thing how to get here, and now it's out of control – doing whatever it wants." Georgie looked over at her brother, who was spinning in circles.

"Dustin, what are you doing?" Mike asked. Dustin didn't stop looking at something in his hands. Georgie called out to him, but got no answer. All three of them were shouting at him until they finally caught his attention.

"I need to see your compasses," he said, ignoring the question. "Your compasses, all of you compasses! Right now!"

Mike looked confused, but went with Lucas upstairs to get more out of his room. Dustin scanned around the basement for the ones he knew were around. Georgie turned to El, brushing a few stray pieces of the wig off of her forehead.

"How are you?" Georgie asked.

"Okay."

Georgie raised an eyebrow. "How do you feel?"

"Scared."

Georgie put her arms around El, and rested her head on top of the younger girls'. Georgie felt the same way.

One time, when Dustin was six, he was swinging on a tire swing. Georgie was nine at the time – counting the days until her tenth

birthday when she would hit double digits and leave her brother in the dust. But as he was swinging, the rope snapped. Georgie had been so terrified that she was gunna lose her little brother. And suddenly, she didn't want to leave him in the dust. She liked having someone to play with just a few doors down at home. And someone to hold onto when mom and dad were fighting in the kitchen.

The fear she felt then, feels about the same now. The panic she felt when he hit the ground is how she feels every time she thinks of Barb or Will. She feels like someone is hitting the ground after a rope snapped – but this times there's nothing she can do to help.

All she had to do all those years ago was help him up, brush off the dust and give him a hug and a kiss. Now, she needed to fight, but she didn't know who to fight. And she needed to plan but she didn't know *what* to plan. It was like, she needed to act as soon as possible. But she also had so many missing pieces to the puzzle that she couldn't even figure out what the picture is anymore.

"Okay?" El asked.

"What? Yeah, I'm okay." Georgie smiled sadly at El.

"Scared?"

"Yeah, I'm pretty scared."

6. Chapter 6

There was a pile of compasses on the small table in Mike's basement. Dustin flipped them all face up, as everyone else watched. Georgie stood behind her brother, her arms crossed watching the scene. She knew her brother, and how smart he was. She knew he had something.

"What's exciting about this?" Mike said, looking at Dustin.

"They're all facing north, right?" Dustin asked.

"Yeah, so?" Lucas said, rolling his eyes.

"Well, that's not true North," Dustin said.

"What?"

Georgie took a step forward to get a better look. He was right, they were all pointing at something else. And it didn't mean they were broken, they were all facing the same way. It was impossible for that to happen unless they were all picking up something else.

Something like pure, raw energy.

Dustin figured out how to find it.

"I mean exactly what I just said: that's not true north." Dustin pointed at the table. When neither of the other boys said anything, Dustin spoke up again. "Are you both seriously this dense?"

Lucas shrugged.

"The sun rises in the east, and sets in the west. Which means that's true north," he said, pointing.

"So, what you're saying is the compasses are broken." Mike seemed uninterested in this development.

"No," Georgie said, taking a step back. "It would be impossible for all of them to be off the exact same amount. It means something is

completely disrupting every single compass on that table."

"Exactly, they can't *really* break, there's no battery pack on these things. There's nothing on it to break, only bend. Do you even know how compasses work? The needle is naturally drawn to the earth's magnetic north pole."

"So what's wrong with them?" Lucas asked.

"That's what I couldn't figure out," Dustin said. "Then I remembered you can change the direction of a compass with a magnet. If there's a presence of a more powerful magnetic field, the needle deflects to that magnet."

"And whatever gate we're chasing would have so much power," Georgie said. Turning to look at Eleven, she realized the girl looked worried. But she couldn't tell if it was because of the discovery or because she was always worried.

"Disrupting the magnetic field," Mike said. The other boys were cluing into the idea.

"Exactly," Dustin said, grinning.

"Meaning if we follow the compasses north..." Lucas trailed off.

"They should lead us to the gate." Dustin smirked. Proud of himself for figuring it out. Georgie was proud too, she loved how smart he was.

"So I guess that would settle it," Georgie said, picking up her car keys. "We're going for a road trip. Everybody grab a compass. Anything goes wrong and start walking the exact opposite way of the needle. El and I have to stick by someone who has a walkie. Understood?" All of the kids look at her. "*Understood?*"

The kids chimed in variation of yes all at the same time. If she was going to let them go hunt down a gate that lets monsters into their reality, then they were going to have some ground rules.

"If anything gets too hairy we leave. If we see one sign of a monster we leave. If I say that it's time to go, then we leave then too."

"Who put you in charge?" Lucas asked, clearly not interested in her rules. Didn't he realize it was clearly for his safety?

"The fact that I have a car, and the fact that if anyone says no then I'll walk right out of here and tell everyone's parents that their kids aren't playing in Mike's basement but in the forest looking for monsters." Georgie turned to El. "But I'd leave you out of it, don't worry."

"You'd protect her and not us?" Lucas asked, putting both his hands on his chest. He has formed some kind of distaste for Eleven. Georgie didn't know why and she knew that asking would probably either make things worse or he would just deny it but she was curious, for sure.

"I'm doing everything I do to protect all of you, including Will. Now," she turned on her heel. "Time to go. C'mon, Eleven. You get shotgun."

"*What!?*" Dustin shouted.

But Georgie was already up the stairs.

Georgie drove with the music down low so she could hear whenever Dustin told her to make a turn. Finally, they came to a slow stop at the edge of the woods, close to the train tracks. Georgie knew this area pretty well. Her and her old friend Liam used to play out here when she was younger. They'd stopped hanging out when she got too into studying and school. Every time she thought about the danger she was putting herself in, she wondered if it had ever been the right idea to live in her books instead of the present.

Usually, she came to terms with the fact that she was doing what was right for her and her future. But lately she wasn't so sure.

Lately she lonely.

"I guess we walk from here," Dustin said, getting out of the car. Every one filed out, and stood by the edge of the trees. Dustin handed Georgie a compass.

"Remember, exact opposite direction of the needle."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Dustin said, waving his hand at her. "We know." She smacked him on the top of the head. "Hey! You can't hit kids!"

"Actually, you're the only kid I *can* hit," she said. "You're my baby brother."

"Are we going to find this thing, or what?" Lucas asked, getting slightly irritated.

Georgie went into the woods first, opting to walk on the tracks instead of through the trees. She walked ahead of all of them, but could still make out little pieces of Lucas and Dustin's conversation, but not Mike and El since they were farther behind. Dustin was going on about compasses, and then Lucas commented on El acting weird. That's when Georgie really tuned in, because she also noticed that the younger girl was acting off.

But the topic changed as soon as it started, and they were back to silence.

The trees brought back happier memories than the ones they were making now. She used to love playing in the woods, especially in fall. When the leaves would crackle beneath her feet as she played, not a care in the world. All that mattered then was finding something new, or inventing a new world with Liam. What was he up to lately? She saw him in the halls every now and then, but they'd been strangers for years. Was he different? Maybe he still loved checkers, and maybe his favourite movie was still Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. Or maybe he was completely different. Georgie sure was.

She sighed, and looked down at her compass. They were still on the right path, wherever that would lead. The the monster lair. They could *not* make hunting them any easier for the monster. If it was even hunting them. The line between them being in danger and putting themselves into that danger was so fine that Georgie didn't even know where it was anymore.

The wind blew again, sending a shiver down her spine. She wrapped her wind breaker tighter, wishing she had worn a warmer jacket. She made a mental note: next time they monster hunt, wear at least a jean jacket. If they didn't get pulled into the upside down today, that

is.

It was a pessimistic thought. But what else was she supposed to think? For the first time in a long time she had no *idea* what was going on. She had no answers, and that scared the shit out of her.

They continued walking for a while. Georgie switched between being zoned out, sometimes being scared of what was going on and sometimes thinking about a memory when she saw a place that she'd been before. She hadn't even thought about these tracks in a long time. She glanced down at the compass again. She whistled and everyone stopped walking, their conversations ending abruptly. Without saying anything, she veered off the tracks. It was time to start stomping through the trees.

It was impossible to say how close they were.

"My feet hurt," Dustin said, leaning against a tree. "Let's take a break."

"Then it'll take us longer and your feet won't hurt any less. Let's just keep moving," Georgie said, not slowing down at all. Forcing him to come along as well. He groaned, but said nothing else about it.

As they followed they walked farther, the tress began to get more sparse until finally they came across a clearing. It was a junkyard, with many rusted cars and some kind of farm equipment. Did someone own this land? Who's was this? The grass around was all dead. Because of the season change, not because of monsters.

"Oh no," Dustin said, looking around.

"What's oh no?" Lucas asked, tone in his voice a mix between concerned and agitated.

"We're headed back home," Dustin said, turning around to look at the sky.

Mike asked "What?" at the same time Lucas said "Are you sure?" Georgie put a hand on Dustin's shoulder, looking at the sky and looking around. He was right, and she didn't even notice.

"Yep, setting sun right there we looped back around." Dustin pointed

up at the sun.

"And you're just realizing this now?" Lucas asked.

"Why is this all on me?" Dustin asked, also getting irritated.

Georgie took her hand off her brother, watching as the pair of them began to bicker. This wasn't like them, these boys hardly ever fought. It was like Will being gone has cracked everything. Reality. Friendship. It was as if he was the one in the group that kept everyone thinking reasonably, and now, well now they were at each other's throats all day long. One couldn't speak without another one getting annoyed.

"Maybe the gate moved," Mike said, bringing Georgie's mind back into the conversation.

"I doubt that's the case," Georgie said, crossing her arms.

"Maybe it's something here," Mike suggested, pointing at all the junk.

"Nah, it would have to be like a super magnet," Dustin said.

"It's not a magnet. She's been acting weirder than normal. If she can slam doors with her mind she can definitely screw up a compass," Lucas said, raising his voice and pointing at Eleven.

"Lucas..." Georgie started, but trailed off. It was worth asking – he just should have done it nicely.

"Why would she do that?" Mike asked.

"Because she's trying to sabotage our mission. Because she's a traitor!" Lucas flailed his arms. He walked towards her, and Georgie did as well. Not to interrogate her but to step in if need be. Lucas seemed angry still, and she didn't want Eleven to get defensive or Lucas to lash out.

"Lucas, what are you doing?" Mike asked.

"Yeah, maybe try to calm down a bit," Georgie suggested. Lucas kept walking towards her.

When they were face to face, Lucas spoke. "You did it. Didn't you? You don't want us to reach the gate. You don't want us to find Will."

"All right, that's enough." Georgie used her stern voice. Eleven looked as if she was about to cry, so Georgie came and stood on her side.

"Lucas, c'mon seriously just leave her alone," Mike pleaded.

"Admit it, admit it!" Lucas grabbed her arm, and Georgie caught a glimpse of the blood on her sleeve. That's what happened when she used her powers. Lucas threw her arm down. "There's blood. I knew it."

"Lucas! Come on!"

"I saw her wiping her nose on the tracks. She was using her powers," Lucas said, facing Mike completely. At this point, Georgie believed Lucas, but she wasn't mad at El. She was concerned. Eleven knew more about this than anyone. They should've asked her first what she wanted to do. Georgie put her arm around the younger girl and she flinched, but then relaxed. Trust was proving to be hard to build with the girl.

"That's old blood, right El?" Mike asked, looking at her. Her chin trembled more and she didn't answer. "*Right*, El?"

"It's not..." She paused. "It's not safe."

"El," Georgie said. "C'mon, come over here with me."

Georgie led Eleven towards a rusted old bus and away from the boys who quickly got into a screaming match. She didn't like where this was headed. She wanted to go talk to Joyce about everything, and see if maybe she had any more idea what was going on. She was aligning herself with a bunch of moody preteen boys and the town crazy (societies words – not Georgie's. Georgie liked Joyce quite a bit). But it's what felt right.

As the boys yelled at each other, Georgie tried to talk to El, but the younger girl was focused on the fight. When Lucas called El the monster, Georgie thought it was time to step in.

"That's enough!" Georgie yelled, stepping towards the boys. But before she got there, Mike yelled for Lucas to shut up and the fight turned physical. "God dammit, Dustin stand back!" she yelled, trying to Mike off of Lucas, but when they rolled over she tripped, and cut her leg on a piece of sheet metal lying on the ground. "Shit!" she yelled, grabbing onto her bleeding thigh. Dustin ran over and sat on his knees beside her, no longer caring as much about his fighting friends.

Eleven began to yell, so Georgie and Dustin got dead quiet as they watched Lucas fly back off of Mike and slide into some metal.

"Jesus!" Dustin shouted, getting off his knees and running to Lucas. Both Dustin and Mike tried to shake Lucas awake, but it was no use. He was out cold.

"Why would you do that?" Mike yelled, turning to look at Eleven who looked ready to cry again. "What's wrong with you!? What is wrong with you!?" As her face curled up with sadness, her nose began to drip blood.

Georgie looked down at her leg. Blood had soaked through her pants and coated her hands, and it stung like a bitch. She may need stitches. But she would be fine. Her favourite track pants were ruined though, and if she needs stitches she might not get to play soccer for a few weeks. She really hoped that wasn't the case.

After a few minutes, Lucas slowly got up. Georgie couldn't hear what they were saying so she took her wind breaker off and tied it tightly around her thigh, and then stood up. Feeling a deep sting over the cut. Lucas smacked Mike away and the stormed away from the others. Georgie shouted for him to wait, but he didn't. Mike moved to follow him, but Dustin stopped him. Lucas was too angry to be reasoned with right now.

"Let him go," Dustin said. Georgie agreed.

"Okay kids, party's over. I need to go to the hospital and get this cut looked at. C'mon boys, Eleven. Time to go." Georgie turned around.

"Where's El?" Mike asked, looking around. Georgie did too, but saw

no sign of her. Dustin and Mike both started shouting and looking around but they saw no sight of her. "You should go back, Georgie. I'm going to stay and look for her."

"No way, sorry kiddo. You're both coming with me. I'm not leaving you waltzing around the woods," she said, shaking her head. "Let's go."

"What? I can't leave her out here! You let Lucas go," Mike argued, he crossed his arms in protest.

"You're right, and Dustin's going to call and ask for him, and if he's not home I'll call the police. Test me."

"You won't win, Mike. Let's just go, we can look tomorrow." Dustin walked beside his sister, and put an arm around her to help relieve some of the weight.

"I'll drop you two off and then I'm going to head to the hospital," Georgie said, as the trio started walking back towards the car.

"Don't be stupid, I'm staying with you," Dustin said. She had hoped that he would say that.

"Are you sure you can drive? I mean, you cut your leg," Mike said.

"I'm fine, I'm not light headed and it's not my driving leg. It just really stings so I'll take it slow, all right?" Georgie limped along. Everything was going to be okay.

7. Chapter 7

The hospital lobby was practically empty when Georgie and Dustin wobbled into the building. There were people coughing and napping, but no one seemed to be bleeding. Maybe there was a chance she wouldn't be waiting around for hours. Right when she entered the lobby, she untied her windbreaker and thrust it into her brother's chest.

"Go rinse this off with cold water, the track pants are ruined but there's still hope for the jacket." She looked at him as he clutched the black garment. "Please." He rolled his eyes but headed to the bathroom anyway.

She got an administrative paper from the lady at the front desk who looked alarmingly casual about sending the bleeding teenager off to do paperwork.

Georgie flopped awkwardly into a seat, grabbing her thigh when the cut knocked against the edge of the seat. It was really throbbing at this point, but it seemed like the bleeding may have stopped. But it was hard to tell, she was pretty much covered in dried blood. It was everywhere. Her hands, her shirt and all over her car seat. She's going to have to clean that tomorrow, on top of homework, and looking for El.

And they still have to follow the compasses to the gate.

Georgie quickly scribbled down everything, and at some point doing the paperwork Dustin showed up beside her with a blood stained, soaking wet jacket. She shook her head, and Dustin threw it onto the seat next to him. She'd give their mom a go at it, she could get almost any stain out.

"Would you mind giving this to the nurse?" Georgie asked, handing him the papers. He nodded and rushed over, and walked back.

"They'll call you when they're ready."

"Great," she said, sarcastically. They'd be waiting for three hours at

least.

Two hours and a quick nap later, Georgie was sitting on the uncomfortable table, in an uncomfortable gown getting her thigh stitched. She was hoping to avoid this. Stitches risked her spot on the team – and she really, really didn't want that. The team was her way into college (even though she still had next year) and it was one of the things she loved most in the world. And she had worked so hard for it. Soccer was something that she could grip onto when homework wasn't enough or she didn't have any.

Maybe Dustin was right.

Georgie did have control issues.

"I'm not on pain meds! I can still walk, I don't see why this is a big issue," Georgie said, getting agitated.

"It's policy," the nurse said.

Georgie rolled her eyes and looked over to Dustin who was trying to get in touch with their mother. The hospital staff wasn't letting Georgie drive herself home. She didn't understand why. She wasn't prescribed anything, she was allowed to walk. It didn't help that she was already mad.

Because she wasn't allowed to play soccer until the stitches were completely healed. This day was a bitch.

"Your policy sucks," she said, walking over to her brother and leaning on the wall near him. "Any answer from mom?" He shook his head. "Damn, okay try the Byers' house. If Joyce or Jonathon are home I'm sure they'll drive us."

Georgie hadn't been stranded without a ride somewhere since her dad left her at the store once.

"You could call Steve," Dustin said, hanging the phone up after another unsuccessful attempt.

"Why? We're not friends," she said, crossing her arms.

"Yeah, but..." Dustin sighed, "he drives. And that's all we need so just, call him. I'm tired." She grabbed the phone from him, nodding silently before dialing the numbers. She appreciated that he didn't comment that she knew it already.

"Dustin, this is stupid – why would he do this?" Georgie hissing, gripping onto the phone.

"I don't know, but you don't have a lot of friends." Dustin flinched when Georgie hit him with the phone.

"Yes, I do, *idiot!*" Georgie put the phone back to her ear as she spoke. "Oh, hello. I was wondering if Steve was home? Oh, thank you."

"Was that him?" Dustin asked.

"If that was Steve, would I have asked for Steve?" Georgie perked up when Steve said hello on the other line. "Steve, hey. How are you?"

"Not in a great mood so can you make it quick?" Steve said, his tone laced with irritation. She knew this was a stupid idea.

"I didn't mean to catch you at a bad time, I can just figure it out myself – sorry for bothering..." She was cut off by Steve saying, "just tell me."

"I'm kind of stuck at the hospital and they won't let me drive myself home so I called everyone I know but they're all busy so... I called you." She hated that she rambled when she got nervous.

"You need a ride?" he asked.

"Yeah," she said. "But I can just call someone else if you don't want to. You're under no obligation or anything. Don't feel bad for saying no or anything."

"I'll do it," he said sharply, she heard his keys jingle over the phone. "Just be ready."

Georgie and Dustin sat on the curb outside the front doors of the hospital. Her car was within eye sight but this nurse was staring at

them and he was staring at them like a hawk. And it's not like she could run to the car. And Steve would be even more pissed if he got there and they were gone. The nurse, Georgie overheard his name was Malcolm, scratched his beard and coughed – but it was a fake cough, almost like he could read her mind. It freaked her out a little and she turned away, wrapping her arm around Dustin. The younger Henderson was trying not to fall asleep.

The sky was beautiful. It was pitch black, but absolutely filled with stars. Almost as if they had tripled in number in the last few nights. Being exhausted and outside made her forget of the terrors in the town, or she may have been a little more afraid of the surrounding forest. She looked up, resting her head on top of her brother's. Staring into the peaceful sky for a few minutes before headlights turned into the parking lot. Steve turned his high beams off too late and Georgie has light imprinted on the inside of her eyes for a bit.

They stood up and said nothing to Malcolm. Georgie got into shotgun and Steve took a peek at the gauze wrapping around her leg through the long cut in her pants.

"That's too bad, those are nice pants." He put the car into drive and turned around.

"Yeah, my favourite."

"I know, you wear them all the time."

Something inside her stomach did a flip, and she considered actually punching her abdomen to highly recommend to her body that those types of feelings – about Steve – were absolutely unacceptable. Not only he was captain douchebag of the school: he was Nancy's boyfriend. And Georgie liked Nancy, so she wouldn't do anything like that.

The rest of the drive was silent, but the air told it's own story. It was tense, and Georgie knew that something was off with Steve. She turned around to see her brother was already sleeping, sprawled across the backseat. He wasn't wearing his seat belt, and that stressed Georgie out but ... she had to pick her hill to die on here, and she decided to let him sleep. Georgie turned back around, leaning back

into her seat. It was a dangerous game, because she was so comfortable that she could've fallen asleep as well. And what if Steve didn't know where to go.

Actually...

They'd been driving the right way this whole time and Georgie had never told him where they lived.

Another stomach flip.

Fuck off, she thought, covering her stomach with her arms as if he could hear the butterflies. The feelings for him were gone. Her gut just needed a reminder.

Steve pulled into the driveway after another few minutes of driving. Georgie reached behind her seat and swatted Dustin a few times in the leg. As if on autopilot: he got up, thanked Steve, and got out of the car to rush into the house. Was the front door not even locked?

Georgie thanked him as well and was about to get out but Steve reached across her and pulled the door shut.

"Wait a minute," Steve said, gripping the steering wheel. "Sit with me a sec."

"Okay," she said, curious as to what this could be about, "but if you reach across me like that again I'll break your arm."

"You outta show a man who just picked you up a little more gratitude." He smiled slightly, as if showing her he was just kidding. As if he was trying to be friends with her.

It was weird.

"Are you okay? You seem irritated," she asked. Subtlety was never her strong suit.

"Would you know anything about Jonathon and Nancy having a tea party at this time of night?" Steve asked, sarcasm dripping off every word.

"Uh, no. Not a thing." The confused look on Georgie's face told Steve that she was telling the truth, and that she was confused about it too.

"Oh, well. That's why I'm mad I went to make sure she was okay and I saw that instead."

"Like... and actual tea party?"

"No," he said, giving her a look. "Not an actual tea party. Don't be ridiculous."

"Okay, I'm tired it's been a long day I have a leg full of stitches," she said, rubbing her temples. She was really tired.

"What happened anyway?" he asked, turning his car back on. This little hang out was clearly over.

"Monster hunting," she said. "Uh, Dustin and his friends wanted to play a game and I didn't want them to go alone..."

"You really care about him don't you? It's nice."

"Yeah," she said. "Thanks again, by the way. I really do appreciate it."

"I know you do. Because you're a good person," he said. Georgie nodded, and moved to get out of his car and that's when a jolt of stinging pain ran up her leg, ending at her hip.

"*Shit*," she hissed, grabbing onto her leg. Sitting still for a long time made the pain catch up to her. "Sorry." She kept trying to awkwardly.

"Don't try to do that again, just wait." Steve got out of the car and went around to her side. In his headlights, he looked like the Steve she knew when she was in the ninth grade and he was in the tenth. When he was nicer.

She looked up at him as he stood in the doorway. She reached around her and put his hand on her lower back, gently hoisting her out of the car. She wrapped her arms his shoulders and held on tightly. He got her onto her feet, and let her keep one arm around him as he guided her to the door.

"Do you want help in, or?"

She put pressure on her leg and felt the stinging again. Maybe this was why they didn't want her to drive. Because halfway home she would've been in too much pain to do it.

"Yes, please."

Steve opened the door and guided her down the hallway, and into the room she pointed at. He brought her over to the bed, and let her sit down.

"Do you want like better pants or something?" he asked, looking around. His hands were perched on his hips. She pointed at a pair of sweatpants on the floor. He grabbed them, handing them over and continuing to look at her.

"Uh, Steve?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you mind?" she asked, holding up the pants.

"Do you... uh, want help?"

"What? No, I want you to turn around a second."

"Oh, yeah. Okay." He turned around, scratching the back of his head.

As Georgie changed, she looked at Steve. She never imagined him standing in her bedroom. He was such a jerk. But he was beautiful. And she knew that. From his delicately styled hair to his effortless with effort style. She crawled back onto the bed and told him he could turn back around.

He looked at the scene in front of him. Georgie who was always so calm and collected, looked tired and completely run down. Her hair which was usually tight and neat was messy and baby hairs were clinging to her forehead. She kind of looked like shit. But still cute.

"Do you need anything else?" he asked, walking over to the bed.

"No, I'm okay I think. Thanks for everything, and for tucking me in." She smiled at him, and he smiled back. And it even felt genuine.

"You're welcome," he said, walking to the door to show himself out. "Oh, and uhm, don't be nervous. To call me for help or anything. We're friends, right?"

"I guess so," she said, laying down. "Goodnight, Steve"

"Goodnight, Georgie."

Steve flicked out her light and left. Almost as soon as she heard the front door close, she fell asleep.

8. Chapter 8

November 12th, 1983

HAWKINS, INDIANA

In the morning, after a few bitter hours of sitting on the bench at soccer practise, Georgie was out to go find the boys. She checked at home first, and Dustin was already gone. When she got to Mike's however, she saw Lucas gearing up to leave at the end of his driveway. He rolled his eyes when he saw her but stayed put none-the-less. She didn't like the looks of that.

"Where ya headed? Meet the boys?" she asked, stopping right next to him.

"No, they left to find *her*, I'm going to find *it*," he said.

"Well, you're not going alone. Get in," she said, unlocking the passenger door. "But we don't go through it or do anything with it without back up."

"Deal," he said, pushing his bike into his lawn and climbing into the car.

"All right, *Rambo*, just tell me where to go," she said, driving the car off again. As she drove by a power van, the guy working was staring at her as they drove, and she would've sworn that he looked at her license plate. "You ever see that guy working out front before?"

"No, why?"

"Just wondering."

"I'm serious you know," she said, dragging her sunglasses off her head and over her eyes. "We're not doing anything at the gate without back up. That just seems like an easy way to lose."

"I know, I know. I just don't want to look for crazy." Lucas crossed his arms and looked out the window.

"Be nice," she warned.

"How can you say that when you were there," he said, exasperated. "She threw me. She cut your leg open. Dustin said you got like twenty stitches."

"The cut wasn't her fault, it was yours and Mike's. And it was eight stitches, not twenty." Georgie turned where Lucas told her too. They stopped in almost the same place as last time and got out of the car.

"Guess the lying hadn't started until after this," Lucas said. "Unless she's lurking around the corner.

"C'mon man, she was scared of it. Maybe she was afraid of the monster. Maybe she's seen it or something." Georgie got out of the car, limping slightly. Lucas looked at her and shook his head, whispering a rushed apology before grabbing his backpack. "Don't be sorry, just don't start fights around scrap metal."

"I didn't start it," he said.

"You both did, don't even try to blame someone else."

They began walking through a lot of the same track. And they cut off the track at the same part. It was when they had to change direction off the tracks is when they realized it was different. They had to head left, not right. They kept walking, but their light chatter had completely stopped and turned into silence as they tracked through this new territory. Knowing that they were heading towards this thing was creepy, to say the least.

"So, what do we do. Find it and report back? Seems like a waste of time," Lucas said. "What if it get shut down or something? And Will gets trapped?"

And Barbara.

Georgie shuddered.

"So what do you propose? We storm in? Ask for Will and Barb back with our mean voices? I can't even walk right. You're our first line of defence and we're not even sure it's only one monster." Georgie rolled

her eyes. "And we have no weapons."

"I brought weapons, you didn't?" he asked, tripping slightly over a branch.

"I brought a pocket knife because my house isn't big on monster killing equipment."

They wound up in front the Hawkins Lab. It's always been there – they just had no idea what happened inside it. Lucas climbed up in a tree and used his binoculars to watch what was going on. Georgie moved closer to the fence to see what was going on. She could see a handful of vans, but that's about it. Nothing interesting at all. Until Lucas passed down a set of binoculars.

The boy was prepared.

She saw those vans before. They've been all around the neighbourhood. They'd been at Lucas' less than a few hours ago. She felt sick. Someone was onto them. Knowing that they were in danger, and her letting the kids play renegade has put them all in danger. She should've known better. She could cry.

"We have to get back," he said, in a whisper-yell. He crouched down and Georgie moved in closer. "Those vans were the same as outside my house. And this is where the compasses lead."

"Oh God, someone knows about us looking around." Georgie thought for a moment. "If they had found you..."

"They must know about the others."

Without hesitation, both of them took off running the way they came. Georgie could feel her thigh burning as the stitches ripped open, but she didn't care. Not one bit. She had to find her brother. All Georgie could hope was that they found El and had already gotten back to Mike's house.

They kept running at a steady pace. Lucas was yelling that he saw all of them getting into vans and driving off. Lucas was trying to communicate with the others while they ran but even she knew that they were still way to far out of range.

Georgie fished her keys out of her pocket and tried to ignore that the keys themselves had blood all over them. Another pair of pants bloodstained. Fantastic.

The last time Georgie had run this fast, and pushed her self this hard was when she tried out for soccer. And now she was rushing to save her brother and his friends.

It took them less than an hour to get back to her car. They jumped it, and Georgie started it up right away.

"Before you do up your seat belt, I need you to reach into my soccer bag and grab the bandages out of there," she said, turning the car on and going. She did up her own seat belt as the car began to move.

"Okay, hold on." Lucas did as he was told and came back with the bandages. "Here." He handed her the roll, but squished some fast food napkins in-between and held down the edge so she could pull it around. Together they wrapped her leg until Lucas snapped some clips in place to hold it all together. Then he got back onto trying to connect with everyone else.

Dustin started answering, but it was choppy and unintelligible. Which meant that's what Lucas probably sounded like to them.

"Shit!" Georgie shouted, hitting the steering wheel. "What's the range?"

"From Mike's house... uh, Auburn street," Lucas said, gripping onto his car door handle. Georgie was driving over the speed limit and Lucas trusted her, but it was still kind of scary.

"Okay, okay," she said, going even faster. She ran a stop sign without fully stopping, and it was like she was trying to race the road. She did slow down a bit when they got to Auburn street though. Still over limit, but not as bad.

"Lucas? Do you copy?" Dustin asked, still choppy, but understandably so.

"I copy!" Lucas shouted. "They know about us! The bad men are coming, the bad men are coming! All of them!" he shouted. They

didn't know if they were coming in clear, so Lucas kept repeating it.

"C'mon, fuck!" Georgie shouted when someone turned in front of her and started driving like Miss Daisy. "You have to be kidding me."

Georgie sped up slightly, and went around the car. Did people not realize this was life or death for some people. Of course they didn't. How would they?

"Dustin! Dustin! Do you copy?" Lucas shouted, they were much closer, now, it should be clear.

"Yeah, Lucas! They're on us," Dustin replied, clear as day. Georgie felt her heart speed up.

"Where are you?" Lucas asked.

Georgie didn't hear the answer, but she heard Lucas answer Elm and Cherry. She took a hard left to get there faster. "Do we have a plan?" Georgie asked, taking another quick left.

"Don't get caught by the bad men, I think."

Four blocks away.

Three blocks.

Two blocks.

As she pulled into Elm, the boys and El were biking past, with a bunch of the vans behind them. She shouted for Lucas to unlock the back door, and the boys ditched their bikes onto someone's front lawn. "Get in, get in, get in!" Lucas shouted, watching as the vans got closer.

As soon as the three kids were in, Georgie put it in reverse and went back a full block until she could quickly turn at an intersection.

She was driving like a maniac. Someone was going to call the cops. And that might actually be what kills them. Oh God, she would be the reason her little brother and all his friends are dead.

"Where are we going?" Georgie asked, driving straight. She had to push out the panic, right now her focus was the kids.

"The junk yard, it's the only place I can think they haven't seen us," Mike said.

Georgie nodded quick, speeding down the street. When a van turned the corner it completely blocked her in. "Shit," she mumbled. It was over, she couldn't drive through a house.

They were blocked.

"Drive fast," El said, gripping onto the head rests of both of the two front seats. Georgie didn't say anything she just continued speeding towards the van.

She was terrified they were going to crash, and it felt like that what was coming. Oh God, she should've realized the danger they were actually getting themselves into. When the van got close enough that Georgie could see the driver as the very man she saw at Lucas' house, the van flew into the air above her own car, flipping and landing behind them – completely blocking the road. She continued to drive, laughing at the mess behind her as she drove. It was kind of exciting.

Until she thought that maybe the man in the van didn't live. Then it wasn't so funny anymore.

But she did still feel super alive.

"What is going on?" Dustin finally said. "What did you guys find out."

"Shh," Georgie said, slowing at a stop sign. "First we make sure we're far away from those guys. Then we talk. They know about us. For all we know the car is bugged or something. That guy knew that we left Lucas' and the car was alone for a while." There was a chorus of okays and all rights. "Anyone hurt? El, sweetheart there's more bandages in the duffle bag, it's at your feet there. You can wipe your nose."

"Your leg," she said, looking at it.

"Yes, it's very hurt. But we can deal with that later. For now we have to worry about living. Stitches are going to have to wait."

Georgie kept driving. Her only focus was saving the kids and getting them the hell out of here. After that, she had no plan.

No God damn idea what to do.

9. Chapter 9

Georgie pulled onto the dead grass, tearing some of it up with her tires. When she put the car in park, the kids were already climbing out. She popped the trunk of the car. Georgie got out, limping around to the other side to get the duffle bag out of the back seat of the car. She set it on the front of the car. She had to redress her wounds quickly. All of the kids were catching their breath.

"Dustin!" Georgie shouted, "backpack."

Without hesitation he threw it over to her and she caught it, filling it with whatever she thought might be useful from the dufflebag. Gauze, pain reliever. That kind of thing. Whatever random stuff she had in the bottom of her soccer bag.

"Holy shit! Did you see what she did to that van?" Dustin stammered, looking around at the junk. He sounded excited, but scared. Amazed, even. Georgie froze, taking in what it was that she was doing. Packing survival gear. Getting ready for something bad, she closed her eyes, trying to claim a gasp on reality.

"No, Dustin. We missed it," Mike said sarcastically.

Georgie walked to the trunk and threw some of the water bottles from in there in the backpack. She was quietly listening to the conversation.

"I mean that was..." Dustin said, but paused, looking for the words.

"Awesome," Lucas said. "It was awesome."

Lucas walked over to Eleven, and crouched in front of her. "Everything I said about you being a traitor and stuff... I was wrong. I'm sorry." He put his hand on her back, his sign of apology and retreat, Georgie sighed. She was thankful the party wasn't splitting up, they all needed to pull together right now. She let them play this out, but kept a keen ear on the conversation in case it veered back into unproductive arguing. It was important for them to handle it themselves.

"Friends," El said. "Friends don't lie. I'm sorry too."

"Me too," Mike said, slowly raising his hand towards Lucas.

It was a huge relief to Georgie when Lucas accepted the apology. It was time for them to work together, and it was very important that everyone was on the same page. These kids were smart, and resourceful, and she was so so happy that out of anyone she's on their team in a crisis. But these were still kids. Hell, she was just a kid. But her only responsibility right now was to keep Dustin safe, and the rest of the kids. She couldn't bare the thought of something happening to any of them.

Guess that kind of made her one of the party now, too.

She closed the car, and slipped the backpack onto her shoulder. Then walked around to the front of the car and put the duffle bag back in the backseat. Her leg was on fire, so she took three of the pain relievers. Hoping that it would help at least a little bit.

"We need a plan," she said, walking towards the boys' talking about the bad men. Dustin was very visibly upset, and Georgie wrapped her arm around him. He put his arm around her as well and leaned into her side.

"Where do we go from here?" Mike asked, putting his hands on his hips.

"We should debrief first. What do we all know?" Dustin said.

"Me and Georgie may have figured out the source," Lucas said, kneeling on the ground and using a couple of sticks to make a square. Everyone filed around him and sat in the dirt. Georgie sat beside her brother, and put her bad leg in front of her. She wasn't bleeding through the bandages yet, which is a good sign. She noticed Dustin eyeing the bandages, but he didn't say anything.

"What's this?" Mike asked.

"A map," Lucas said.

"Of what?" Dustin asked, looking closer. Georgie laughed, because it

wasn't like he could see anything more clear, it's just sticks and dirt. He glared at her.

"This is Randolph Road, right here," Lucas said, drawing a line in the dirt with a small twig. "The fence starts here and goes all the way around." He put an empty soda can in the middle of the pile. "And this is the lab right here. The gate's gotta be in there somewhere. It's gotta be."

"Well, who owns Hawkins lab?" Dustin asked. Lucas shrugged.

"The sign says Department of Energy," Georgie said, remembering noticing them every few yards on the fence line.

"Department of Energy? What do you think that means?" Dustin asked.

"It means government. Military," Mike said, throwing an arm up and letting it slap back onto his lap. He was getting frustrated.

"Then why does it say energy?" Dustin asked.

"Just trust me all right? It's military. My dad's told me before."

"Mike's right. There's soldier's out front." Lucas said. Georgie didn't know what the hell these kids were planning. Breaking into the lab? No way they wouldn't get caught. No way.

"Do they make, like, light bulbs or something?" Dustin had a lot of questions.

"No, weapons," Mike answered. "To fight the Russians and commies and stuff."

"Weapons," Lucas said. As if all at once they realized the danger. They couldn't just sneak through a military base with their hopes and good intentions.

"Oh. Jesus, this is bad." Dustin said.

"Really bad. The place is like a fortress," Lucas said.

"Well, what do we do?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know, but we can't go home. We're fugitives now." Mike said.

And he was right.

Georgie probably would've panicked more, but the sound of Dustin getting their attention and the distant sound of a helicopter approaching took away most of her focus. It seemed so small in the sky, but she knew it had to be looking for them. And she couldn't let them get caught. Her car was still in the middle of the yard. Did they know she was with them? Would they be looking for it?

One thing she had learned, is that she was kind of okay in really high pressure situations. But only when Dustin was in danger. Her protective instincts were great.

"Shit! Into the bus, all of you! I can't hide the car, there's not enough time," she shouted, directing them into the bus. "Stay down, don't get out of the bus unless you have to."

"Where are you going? What are you doing?" Dustin asked, standing at the bottom of the bus stairs. "You can't leave!"

"I need to get them away," she said. "I'll go back to where you ditched your bikes and get Dustin's. Then I'll ditch the car there and get away."

"Your leg! You won't make it, they'll get you." The look of terror in her eyes was making her stomach turn. She didn't want to leave. But they were going to see her car.

"I'll be okay, Dusty. But I have to go now, Lucas I need to borrow your walkie for a bit." Georgie caught the walkie he threw towards her.

Georgie slipped Dustin's backpack off of her shoulder and gave it to him. "Get down, and stay safe. I love you," she said, kissing the top of his hat. They really had no time left. Any closer and they would see her leaving from the bus. Couldn't risk it.

"I love you too!" he shouted after her as she hobbled towards the car.

The car started up, and she waited until the helicopter got a little closer until she sped off. She made sure not to go too far ahead of the helicopter, because she felt it would be safer if she knew where it was. She held onto the walkie, and spoke into it quick.

"Boys?"

"Yeah, Georgie? We hear you," Mike said.

"Eleven is in charge, don't get caught, okay? Whatever you have to do. Don't get caught," she said, throwing the walkie onto the passenger seat and gripping the wheel with both hands. Might as well use the proper hand placements for reckless driving. Once she was back onto main roads, she drove as safe and fast as possible, while trying to hide. Which was hard to do when the thing that is following you is in the sky.

All she really cared about was her brother, and she would sacrifice her own safety over and over, every time with no hesitation.

She turned onto the street where the boys had ditched their bicycles, and parked her car on the road. On top of everything happening today, she was probably going to get a ticket. She grabbed the walkie off of the seat, and her keys, and got out of the car, rushing onto the lawn and grabbing the one she knew as Dustin's. She was trying to get the bike off the lawn and onto the road before the owners of the house came out, she didn't want to get yelled at. Because realistically, it's pretty rude of them to just leave the bikes there. But it was an emergency. The house owners will just never know that.

Swinging her leg over the bike hurt, and she knew the leg would be bleeding. She knew she was probably destroying her chances at a soccer scholarship, if she couldn't recover from this soon.

Once the bike was on the road, she was peddling as fast as she could.

It was like fire.

The pain she felt.

With each circle of her leg, the pain grew worse and began to pulse in her thigh, forcing her to choose between surrender or agony. Of

course, she would never choose surrender. So she settled on the burning, and chose to put her mind elsewhere. Chemistry might help. So she did what she did best, and thought of school, and work, and science to help her pull through.

Hydrogen.

Helium.

Lithium.

Beryllium.

And that's what she did to try to distract herself. She just listed off the table of elements in atomic order. It wasn't really studying, and she never really needed to memorize it. But she did. And it did help slightly. It still hurt, but as long as she wasn't thinking of it, it was somewhat tolerable.

"Georgie? Come in, Georgie!" Dustin's voice completely changed her train of thought. He was still fine. Dustin was okay.

She stopped on the sidewalk, and set her good leg down to balance herself. "Yeah, I'm here. I'm here. You okay?"

"Yeah, we're waiting on the chief to come get us," he said, "he radio's us. You must've bumped the channel on the top of the walkie. We were worried we wouldn't be able to get a hold of you. I thought they got you."

"Sorry," she said, looking at the dial at the top of it. "Didn't mean to scare you. I'm okay."

"We gotta meet up, make a plan."

"Yeah, okay. I think I'm in the clear. I don't see anyone but I want to keep moving. Get back to you," she said.

"Okay," he said, "I'll radio you when we have a final spot. Go into a public place. Middle of town where no one can snatch you unnoticed."

Georgie looked around. She was on Walnut Street. Another five minutes on the bike and she'd be safely in town. Well, safe was relative.

"Yeah, all right," she said. "I'll try to find someone I know and make conversation."

"Good. Talk soon."

She took a deep breath. Pushing off of the ground, she rode off. Once again listing off the table of elements.

Soon, she was in town. Walking beside the bike with her hands on the handlebars. She hadn't walked around with a bike on her hip in years. Not since she could drive. Not since her dad left. She limped as she walked. The pain in her leg turned down to a dull roar, and she couldn't tell if she was numb or if she was just getting used to it. Georgie just kept walking down the path until she was in front of the movie theatre.

That's when Steve Harrington on a ladder caught her eye. One of the employees was holding the ladder steady, while Steve cleaned something off the sign. He was pretty close to done, but she could still see *'slut Wheeler'* written in red. She had a lot of things to say. Georgie got closer, leaning the bike on the side of the alley.

"You're like a really bad guy, huh?" Georgie said, crossing her arms. She put all of her weight on her good leg. "I've got it." The employee looked at her, and let go of the ladder, letting her take it. He left.

"It was stupid," he said, wiping it off. He avoided looking at her.

"What did it say?"

"Doesn't matter now."

She tapped her fingers on the ladder. "Why are you like this, Steve?"

"Like what?" He stopped wiping and looked down at her. He noticed her messy hair, dirty clothes and the blood covered rag on her leg. "What happened to you?"

"An asshole." Georgie ignored his second question.

"I'm not an asshole," he said, continuing. When he got the rest of it off, he climbed down. Taking the ladder out of her grip and closing it, leaning it against the building.

"I used to think you were the coolest shit, Steve. I really did." Georgie shook her head. "But you refuse to be kind. And that, that just kills it."

With one final look at disappointment m Georgie turned on her heel and walked back over to her bike. "What does that even mean?" he asked, following after her.

She got on the bike. "Means I'm getting over you, Steve."

Once and for all, she thought. And she could only hope she wasn't lying to herself.

10. Chapter 10

"Georgie, come in. Are you there?"

"Hi," she said, peddling while talking. "Where am I going?"

"Byers' house, that's where Hopper is taking us," Dustin said. "Hurry, okay? I'd rather you not be alone in the dark."

"I'm hurrying," she said, peddling faster. He was right. It wasn't safe at night to begin with, let alone now. She didn't question why they were with the chief, but it hardly seemed important.

Bigger fish to fry, and all that.

Georgie got there before the boys' did, and left Dustin's bike on the lawn. She stormed in quick, not waiting to knock. It seemed irrelevant now.

"Georgie?" Johnathan asked, getting off the couch and walking over. He hugged her tightly, and she hugged back. "What happened to your leg?"

"I'll explain later," she said, pulling away. Nancy hugged her next, even though neither of them had any idea the other was involved.

Joyce hugged Georgie quickly, and ushered her to sit down so she could change the bandaging around the wounds. "You've been with the boys' this whole time?"

"Yeah, it's a long story. We were," Georgie paused, and looked at Johnathan's and Joyce's faces before continuing. "Believe it or not we were looking for Will. And I know it sounds crazy to you probably, but I believe them. I think there's uh," she paused again, and looked down. She didn't know if she was embarrassed or scared.

"A monster?" Nancy asked, and Georgie nodded. "Well, you're right."

Her leg was cleaned up, but still hurt like a bitch. Before they could keep talking a truck pulled into the driveway, making all four of

them stand up. Georgie had trusted the boys' and Eleven were fine. But she wouldn't be completely comfortable until she saw Dustin with her own eyes. All of them, safe and sound.

Joyce rushed out first, and the teens followed close behind. Georgie taking up the rear, limping her way to her brother.

As if they hadn't been together less than an hour ago, they held each other tightly in a hug. She was just thankful that they made it back. With everything happening, Hopper was someone she thought she could trust. But realistically, it was a desperate 50/50. Thankfully, they just happened to be on the right side of it.

"You were ready to sacrifice yourself for us," Dustin said, his eyes tearing up. It was like he was safe enough that the adrenaline faded and he had time to be upset.

"I'd do anything to keep you safe," she said, pulling away but grabbing the sides of his face. She looked at her brother for a second, and then kissed him on the forehead. "Let's get inside. I don't even trust the trees anymore."

"This isn't Narnia," Dustin said, rolling his eyes. She used to read those books to him everyday. And the reminder was a pleasant drop of sunshine in the dark right now.

"Oh yeah? Alternate world where bad things are happening and a group of kids and teens are trying to save the day? Sounds the same to me," she said, smiling. They all began walking into the house, where Mike set up shop in the living room to catch everyone up to speed on what they know so far. Before she got inside, she was stopped by Jonathan again, who pulled her into another tight hug.

"You believed my mom when no one else really did. I don't think you know what that means to her." Jonathan said, pulling away from her. "And you stand up for me at school. And you were looking for Will when I thought he was dead. You're a saint to this family."

"I'm here for you guys, for anything – you know that," she said, smiling.

"You've never let us down." Jonathan smiled, and held the door open for Georgie. They were the last two to enter the house. Georgie was glad Jonathan said what he did. It was nice to know, finally, that she wasn't actually making things worse. She wasn't actually going insane. She sat on the floor in the living room before anyone had the chance to offer her a seat on the couch. She needed off her leg that second or she was going to pass out. Joyce brought her pain meds and a glass of water. She said thank you and swallowed it quickly, nearly choking on the water as she chugged it down.

Georgie let the boys explain the acrobat and the flea example, while everyone listened on intently. Nancy, Joyce and Jonathan sat on the couch, watching as the boys told them everything, while Hopper sat on a chair nearby. Mike explained the power the gate has to have, and Lucas explained that Georgie and him had tracked it as far as they could – to the gate of the lab.

"Is this gate underground?" Hopper asked.

"Yes," Eleven said. It was the first thing she'd said in a while. Georgie held out her hand towards Eleven, and the younger girl took it, and smiled so, so slightly. Georgie knew she must be nervous, with all these new adults around. All these new people.

"Near a large water tank?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How'd you know all that?" Dustin asked, stuttering slightly. Just like Georgie, anyone with more information on this made her feel uneasy.

Hopper said nothing.

"He's seen it," Mike said. Hopper's eyes remained fixed on Eleven, and that wasn't lost on Georgie. She felt protective of the younger girl.

"Is there any way that you could reach Will?" Joyce asked. They were closer than ever to finding her son. And her nerves were starting to show. This whole situation was now or never, and everyone knew it. "That you could talk to him in this..."

"The upside down," Eleven said, finishing Joyce's thought.

"Down, yeah."

Eleven nodded. Georgie squeezed her hand gently, letting El know that she was still there. Still safe. Eleven saw the way Georgie had been ready to protect the kids at all costs, and it made Eleven trust her. It was a hard thing to earn, but Georgie did it.

"And my friend Barbara? Can you find her, too?" Nancy asked.

With a slight nod from El, everyone was up and figuring out the best way to do it. But Eleven just took Mike's walkie-talkie and sat at the table, the walkie set up in front of her. The group stood around the table, watching intently, while Georgie and Mike sat at the chairs. Her leg was still throbbing.

El shut her eyes, and fell into a state of focus right away. It wasn't like anything she's ever experienced. Eleven deep in thought, making the walkie-talkie sound static and odd.

Then when things went silent, the lights in the house flickered – and Eleven's eyes opened with a jolt.

"I'm sorry," Eleven said.

"What's wrong? What's happened?" Joyce's voice was fragile, close to breaking.

Eleven's lip began to quiver, and her eyes teared up – showing pure, genuine regret. "I can't find them."

Joyce looked away, not wanting to guilt Eleven into thinking Joyce's pain was her fault. But it was another disappointment following everything else. Jonathan walked away from the table.

"I'm sorry." Eleven spoke again.

"No, sweetie. No, don't be sorry, okay? You tried," Georgie said. "Why don't you go rinse your face off, okay? Bathroom's down the hall."

She nodded, and slowly walked away from the table. Georgie wanted everyone at the table to stay silent for a moment, and let her think. But Joyce wanted to know what happened, and what was wrong with

Eleven. Georgie held her head in her palms, elbows resting on the table. She didn't like where this was going, she didn't want to risk everyone pushing Eleven. Push too hard, and they might lose her.

"Whenever she uses her powers, she gets weak," Mike explained.

"The more energy she uses, the more tired she gets," Dustin said.

"Like, she flipped the van earlier."

"It was awesome," Dustin said.

"I know there's a time crunch here," Georgie said, putting her finger on the table. "But we need to think about her limitations. She's not a tool to be used to save the day. She's a person who's been through a lot who's offering to help us."

"She's drained," Mike said.

"Like a bad battery."

"Well... how do we make her better?" Joyce asked.

"We don't," Mike said. Joyce looked at her hands. "We just have to wait and try again."

"Well, how long?" Nancy asked, she sounded annoyed and it rubbed Georgie the wrong way.

"I don't know," Mike said, shrugging.

"Until she's ready. All her life she's been through God-knows-what and we will not be another group of people who push her to do things she doesn't want to do. I won't let us," Georgie said. "I want to save Will and Barb too, but not at the price of Eleven."

"The bath," Eleven said, startling Georgie. She turned to look at Eleven, standing in the hallway.

"What?"

"I can find them. In the bath."

"What?" Georgie asked, standing and walking over to Eleven.

She looked as though she was trying to think of the words. But it wasn't coming to the young girl. So, Eleven put her hands to her ears, and shut her eyes really tightly. Georgie heard Nancy ask what was going on. But Georgie couldn't be bothered. She was thinking.

Eleven opened her eyes but Georgie was no closer to the answer. Eleven whispered, quiet, and turned around and did the same thing again.

"We were all staring at her," Georgie said, "we were too loud. Distracting. She needs quiet." Eleven turned back to Georgie and nodded quickly. "Sensory deprivation, right?"

"What are you talking about?" Dustin asked, standing beside his sister.

"She needs it to be quiet, dead quiet. No breathing around her, or staring. Right?" Georgie said, and Eleven nodded. "It's like, she can work better and think better if her body isn't focused on a single thing. Sounds, feelings. Gone. Just her mind."

"How do we make that?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know, I know how it works not how to build one."

"Mr. Clarke would probably know," Mike said, and the other kids nodded.

"Okay, Dustin. You call him. El, sweetie, would you go sit on the couch. I have to talk to you about something."

Georgie went to the kitchen to get Eleven some water while El did as she was told.

When Georgie got to the couch, Eleven was sitting quietly with her hands held on her lap. Georgie could hear Dustin talking to Mr. Clarke on the phone. She handed the glass to Eleven, who looked shocked at the gesture. Georgie assured the younger girl that she wasn't in trouble, and no one could've asked her to do anymore.

"I want to make sure that you're okay," Georgie said. "You've been pushing yourself really hard today and I'm worried about you."

"Worried?"

"Yeah, you know... you've been using your powers all day, you must be so tired."

"Yeah."

"You don't have to, you know. If it's going to be too hard for you. We're not forcing you to do anything you don't want to do. I don't want you to hurt yourself by pushing too hard," Georgie said, putting a hand on Eleven's arm.

And that's when she thought about the very thing she's been subconsciously worried about for days. After this is done, after Will and Barb are found (hopefully alive) and the monster is dealt with (even though no one is acknowledging that there's no game plan for that) there is no where for Eleven to go. The lab knows where she is now. She's not safe with Mike anymore – but they have nowhere else for her to go. This fighting, would never end while Eleven was around. And Georgie wouldn't stop fighting, not for a second.

"Scary. Not hurt," Eleven said, breaking Georgie out of the trance she was in.

"If you change your mind at any point, you just say so, and we'll stop."

"Georgie," Dustin said, leaning on the door frame near them. "We need to take this tank elsewhere. We're breaking into the school."

"Ah, yes. Let's add break and enter to the list of many reasons I won't be accepted to UCLA," Georgie's tone was playful. Something no one would have suspected would happen with her in a crisis even two days ago. Georgie was changing, fast.

And she could only hope it was adapt to survive.